

NEIGHBORHOOD CENTERS

Kirschner and Associates recently completed a study of 20 centers in 17 communities ranging from rural to large urban CAAs. Major cities included St. Louis, Washington, Detroit and Los Angeles. The report is a narrative description of center operations and organization. Significant findings are:

Reaching the Poor:

Favorable

- "It is difficult to envision a basically different organization and operating arrangement that is likely to be more successful."

Obstacle

- "Success is very small in terms of the total numbers of persons to be reached, the quality of these contacts and the extent to which hard core poor are being drawn to center operations."

(Other studies indicate a primary problem is that of adequate communication with the hard core poor who are not receptive to communication by means of the mass media. Outreach workers using word of mouth are most effective.)

Coordinating Changing Attitudes:

Favorable

- "Activities and attitudes of many agencies, private and public, have changed significantly in the past two years."
- "Neighborhood Centers appear to be influencing the significant changes that are taking place in some social service agencies, some political and governmental, and among some of the poor."
- "At least a significant minority [of the poor] in contact with the center have an enhanced view of their own possibilities and roles in society."

Obstacles:

- "Integrated efforts of large organizations dealing with broad-range programs, as opposed to modification of individual services, have been rare and not often successful."
- "Differences in outlook, type of service, internal organization and professionalism have often militated against effective joint agency efforts."

Participation of the Poor:

Favorable

- "Participation of the poor as employees in the conduct of center programs seems to be well advanced and largely successful in terms of immediate aspirations."
- "Participation of the nonprofessional in center activities is a very favorable development -- problems involved are minor when compared with the obvious benefits and achievements."

Obstacles

- "Participation of the poor as policy makers and administrators seems to have been achieved on a quantitative basis but there appears to be little effective involvement due to a lack of training in some cases and a lack of authority in others."
- "Hard-core poor are almost totally uninvolved with the centers except on an emergency basis."
- "Many participating members of poor are inarticulate and ineffective . . . Learning has not yet been transferred into effective participation."
- "Paid employment seems to be a much more satisfactory type of participation than Board membership to most local residents."

Kirschner - Description & Evaluation of Neighborhood Centers

Community Sample

1. Houston, Texas
2. Sr. Louis, Missouri
3. Newark, New Jersey
4. Phillipsburg, New Jersey
5. Washington, D. C.
6. Picher, Okla.
7. Chester, Penna.
8. Wichita, Kansas
9. Chicago, Illinois
10. Syracuse, N. Y.
11. Detroit, Mich
12. Tampa, Florida
13. Wise County
14. Los Angeles, Calif.
15. Cleveland, Ohio
16. Portland Oregon
17. Jasper, Alabama

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provocative finding on incompatibility -- crucial point -- deliberating form some time

Kirschner has done good work for us --

first evaluation of neighborhood centers -- tabulating data -- some typology of nabe centers -- important one -- but not scientific sample

CEO picked cities, asked for anonymity --

trying to get an assessment of national program -- not be welcomed back again if into detailed comparison -- undermine what trying to do -- not long drawn-out debate

Ben Zimmerman, community services director, CAP

survey cost \$75,000 -- contract in March 1966 -- due last November

national questionnaire to 66 cities -- lot of gaps -- now compiling tables